

Using Record Linkage to Thwart the Data Terrorist

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Abstract

The traditional goal of record linkage is to maximize the number of correct matches and minimize the number of incorrect matches. Since this is also the goal of the "data terrorist" seeking to identify subjects from microdata files, it makes sense to use record linkage software to thwart the data terrorist.

There are, however, differences between the two situations. At the conceptual level, the relevant loss functions seem quite different. At the practical level, some modifications may be desirable in regard to blocking, assignment, and recoding when using record linkage methods to test the disclosure potential of microdata files. The speaker will discuss these differences and suggest promising ways to use record linkage methods to protect respondent confidentiality.